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Assistance to the Palestinian People

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report, submitted in compliance with General Assembly resolution 71/126, contains an assessment of the assistance received by the Palestinian people and an assessment of needs still unmet and proposals for responding to them. It provides a description of efforts made by the United Nations, in cooperation with the Government, donors and civil society, to support the Palestinian population and institutions.

During the reporting period (April 2016–March 2017), negative trends on the ground continued, affecting the prospects for peace and realization of the two-State solution. The United Nations continued its efforts to respond to humanitarian and development challenges in the context of occupation.

The 2017 Humanitarian Response Plan, requiring $547 million, outlines the programming to address urgent humanitarian needs throughout the occupied Palestinian territory. In addition, following the damage incurred during the 2014 hostilities, the detailed needs assessment and recovery framework for Gaza estimated needs of $3.9 billion for reconstruction and recovery in Gaza.

The Government of the State of Palestine continued to implement the Palestinian National Development Plan 2014-2016: State-building to Sovereignty and, on 22 February 2017, launched the national policy agenda for 2017-2022. The national policy agenda has three pillars: path to independence, Government reform and sustainable development. It identifies 20 national policies. In the agenda, citizens are "put first" and many of its priorities are aligned with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In support of those efforts, the United Nations continued to implement the United Nations Development Assistance Framework for 2014-2017.

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I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted in compliance with General Assembly resolution 71/126, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit to it, at its seventy-second session, through the Economic and Social Council, a report on the implementation of that resolution, containing an assessment of the assistance actually received by the Palestinian people and an assessment of the needs still unmet and specific proposals for responding effectively to them. The reporting period is from April 2016 to March 2017.

2. Information on the living and socioeconomic conditions of the Palestinian people is provided in several reports prepared by other United Nations agencies and submitted to various United Nations bodies, in particular: the annual report on the economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, and the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan; the annual report of the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) (A/71/13); *Common Country Analysis 2016: Leave No One Behind — A Perspective on Vulnerability and Structural Disadvantage in Palestine* (United Nations country team, occupied Palestinian territory, 2016); and the reports of the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process to the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee in April and September 2016.

3. The humanitarian, economic and development needs of the Palestinian people are reflected in several complementary strategic and resource mobilization documents. The 2017 Humanitarian Response Plan seeks $547 million to address the most urgent humanitarian needs, including by enhancing the protective environment and improving access to essential services for the most vulnerable groups throughout the occupied Palestinian territory. The United Nations Development Assistance Framework for 2014-2017 presents the United Nations strategic response to Palestinian development priorities contained in the Palestinian National Development Plan for 2014-2016: State-building to Sovereignty.

4. Throughout the year, the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process continued its efforts to support the peace process and to promote coordination and dialogue between Palestinians and Israelis, the United Nations, the region and the international community.

II. Overview of the current situation

A. Political context

5. The reporting period was characterized by a significant decline in the levels of violence and attacks compared with the period October 2015-March 2016, when tensions were significantly higher. Attacks by Palestinians against Israelis, including by stabbing and vehicle ramming, and the incitement that encourages such acts, continued, albeit at a lower level. Settlement activities showed an upward trend, and the rates of demolitions of Palestinian-owned structures remained high. Palestinian divisions persisted, despite efforts to advance reconciliation, and continue to have negative implications on economic, humanitarian and political aspects of life in the occupied Palestinian territory.

6. Several steps were taken by the international community during the reporting period with the aim of reviving the peace process. On 1 July 2016, the Quartet published a report in which it reaffirmed the support of the international community

for a negotiated two-State solution, reviewed the main trends on the ground that currently pose a serious threat to that vision, and recommended steps for the parties to take in order to create conditions that would allow a return to meaningful negotiations. On 23 December 2016, the Security Council adopted resolution 2334 (2016), in which it reiterated its demand that Israel immediately and completely cease all settlement activities, called for immediate steps to prevent all acts of violence against civilians, including acts of terror, as well as all acts of provocation and destruction, and called upon both parties to refrain from provocative actions, incitement and inflammatory rhetoric. On 15 January 2017, France hosted a conference in Paris to support the peace process, which was attended by representatives of some 70 countries.

7. Internal tensions in the Israeli Government grew as the 26 December 2016 deadline set by the Israeli High Court of Justice for the demolition of the illegal outpost of Amona approached. While their efforts to prevent the demolition of Amona failed, members of the Knesset who support settlement expansion successfully pressured coalition parties to vote in favour of the "regularization bill". The bill met with opposition from the Attorney General of Israel, who deemed it unconstitutional and a violation of international law. If implemented, the law would effectively authorize the appropriation of privately owned Palestinian land that has been used for building thousands of homes in settlements. Its adoption marks a significant shift in the long-standing Israeli position concerning the legal status of the occupied territory. Since its approval on 6 February 2017, several petitions have been filed against it before the High Court of Justice, and its implementation is likely to remain on hold until a judgment has been passed.

8. There was a significant increase in settlement activities during the reporting period. According to official statistics, the second quarter of 2016 saw construction of 1,102 housing units in Area C, the highest quarterly figure during the current term of the Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu. Between April and December 2016, construction started for 2,215 units, almost double the figure for the equivalent period in 2015 (1,167). Planning of new housing units also advanced throughout most of the reporting period, particularly during the first quarter of 2017, when 4,000 housing units were advanced in Area C, with some 250 reaching final approval stage and tenders being issued for another 800. By comparison, the total number of units advanced, approved and tendered for in 2016 was around 3,000. In East Jerusalem, plans for around 1,500 housing units were advanced, yet none reached the final stage of approval. Tenders for 320 units were issued in 2016, marking a decline compared with 580 in 2015 and over 2,000 each year during the period 2012-2014. Evictions of Palestinians from their homes in East Jerusalem as a result of legal moves by settler organizations continued, enlarging the Jewish enclaves in Palestinian neighbourhoods of the city. Dozens of Palestinian herder and Bedouin communities in Area C continued to face pressure to relocate from Israeli authorities, citing a lack of building permits, which are nearly impossible for Palestinians to obtain. Some communities are under imminent threat of being forced to relocate to other Area C locations.

9. Reconciliation talks between Fatah and Hamas failed to achieve progress during the reporting period. The parties continue to disagree on the two main issues under discussion: formation of a national unity Government and the organization of parliamentary and presidential elections. In an effort to promote reconciliation, the President, Mahmoud Abbas, held a meeting with the Chair of the Hamas Political Bureau, Khalid Mish'al, in Qatar in October 2016. Subsequently, representatives of the Palestine Liberation Organization, Hamas and Islamic Jihad agreed, in a meeting held in Beirut in January 2017, on the need to start consultations to form a national unity Government that would work to implement previous reconciliation deals, end

the Palestinian division and prepare for general elections. Also in January, the Russian Federation sought to advance Palestinian reconciliation by hosting a meeting between the Palestinian factions in Moscow. Despite those inter-factional meetings, the sides remain unable to reach consensus on achieving genuine Palestinian unity, on the basis of non-violence, democracy and the Palestine Liberation Organization principles. In another setback to achieving unity, Hamas established the Administrative Committee, a parallel institution to run local ministries in Gaza, on 16 March 2017. Disputes between the Palestinian Authority and Hamas over responsibilities aggravated the electricity crisis in Gaza in January 2017.

10. Municipal elections originally set for October 2016 were postponed for four months after the Palestinian High Court ruled against the Government's arrangement for conducting the elections in Gaza. The Government subsequently established a designated electoral court to resolve the issue of the "illegal" courts in Gaza; Hamas rejected that decision and expressed dissatisfaction with the Government's failure to hold municipal elections in 2016. Municipal elections are now expected to be held exclusively in the West Bank on 13 May 2017.

11. Socioeconomic hardship, underpinned by the persistent occupation and fragile democratic institutions, continued to affect stability in the West Bank and threatened to erode the achievements of the Palestinian State-building agenda. During the second half of 2016, frequent clashes occurred between Palestinian security forces and residents of the Balata refugee camp in Nablus and in the nearby Old City, causing fatalities and injuries to both civilians and security personnel. Those clashes came in the context of increased Palestinian law and order operations in and around the camp and were particularly severe amid political tensions before and after Fatah's seventh party congress at the end of November 2016.

12. The ceasefire that brought an end to the hostilities between Israel and Palestinian armed groups in Gaza on 26 August 2014 has held but remains fragile. There were fewer incidents of demonstrations along the security fence between Gaza and Israel and fewer incidents of cross-border shootings compared to the previous reporting period. In April and May 2016, Israeli security forces discovered two tunnels penetrating its territory from Gaza, leading in one case to a temporary escalation of hostilities in which militants fired 40 mortars and eight rockets at Israel and Israeli forces. One Palestinian was killed as a result of subsequent Israeli strikes. In total, 12 rockets that were fired indiscriminately from Gaza landed in Israel without causing casualties.

13. The United Nations continued to support the Palestinian Government in implementing its $3.9 billion framework for reconstruction and recovery in Gaza. The vast majority of damage to schools, hospitals and water and electricity facilities have been repaired, with the reconstruction of six totally destroyed schools, a clinic and a hospital still ongoing. Meanwhile, 40,000 people remain internally displaced inside Gaza, waiting for their homes to be rebuilt. Of the 17,800 homes which were totally destroyed or severely damaged to the point of being uninhabitable, 57 per cent have been rebuilt and reconstruction work is ongoing on another 14 per cent. However, $115 million is still lacking for the reconstruction of more than 2,800 totally destroyed homes. Of the 153,200 homes which were partially damaged in 2014, 56 per cent have been repaired and work is ongoing to repair another 7 per cent. However, $85 million is still needed for the remaining repairs.

14. The temporary Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism continued to facilitate the entry of material considered by Israel as having dual civil-military use. In the reporting period, nearly 750,000 tons of cement entered Gaza through the Mechanism, an 18 per cent increase compared to the previous year. The increase happened despite new restrictions on cement in 2016, including a six-week

suspension of private-sector cement imports through the Mechanism in April and May 2016, and an artificial ceiling of 90 trucks of cement per day for the remainder of the year. Meanwhile, the import of "dual-use" items, other than cement and rebar, remains strictly curtailed, with only 285 items approved during the fourth quarter of 2016, compared to 1,796 items during 2015.

15. The Palestinian Authority and the Government of Israel have taken several affirmative steps during the reporting period, some in line with the recommendations of the Quartet report. These include agreements on water infrastructure in the West Bank, electricity, 3G and postal services, which all have the potential to strengthen Palestinian civil authority. Implementation of those agreements, however, has been slow.

B. Humanitarian and socioeconomic context

Economic and fiscal developments

16. Economic conditions in the occupied Palestinian territory were characterized by continued recovery from the conflict in 2014. Real gross domestic product (GDP) increased by 4.1 per cent over 2015 levels, as compared with 3.4 per cent growth in 2015. Overall growth was driven by 3.0 per cent growth in the West Bank and 7.7 per cent growth in Gaza. This resulted in positive growth in per capita GDP in both Gaza (4.2 per cent) and the West Bank (0.5 per cent).

17. In 2016, 26.9 per cent of the labour force was unemployed, compared to 25.9 per cent the year before. Unemployment increased in both Gaza (from 41.0 per cent to 41.7 per cent) and the West Bank (from 17.3 per cent to 18.2 per cent). Youth unemployment continued to be the defining challenge of the Palestinian labour market. In 2016, 43.2 per cent of the labour force in the 20-24 age group was unemployed.

Humanitarian developments

18. During the reporting period, 60 Palestinians, including 15 children, were killed in direct conflict incidents (the vast majority by Israeli security forces) across the occupied Palestinian territory and Israel, and some 2,200 Palestinians, including 600 children, were injured. Thirty-four suspected Palestinian perpetrators, including seven children, and 12 Israelis were killed in the context of stabbing, ramming and shootings attacks. This marks a major decline in violence across the West Bank, compared to the previous reporting period.

19. The targeting of Israeli civilians by Palestinians, and the possible use of excessive force in the Israeli security forces' response to these attacks, as well as during protests and clashes, has remained a key protection concern, compounded by the perceived lack of accountability and effective remedies for the loss of civilian life and property.

20. In the West Bank, the reporting period witnessed a 10 per cent decline in the number of Palestinian homes and livelihood-related structures destroyed or seized, compared to the previous reporting period, which witnessed a record number of such incidents since 2008, when the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs began documenting demolitions. During the reporting period, 1,244 people (one half of them children) were affected by the demolition or sealing of 21 family homes of perpetrators, or alleged perpetrators, of attacks against Israelis.

21. As of February 2017, there were 335 Palestinian children in Israel Prison Service facilities (323 boys and 12 girls). Of them, 2 were under administrative

detention, 217 in various stages of their prosecution, and 116 already convicted and serving their sentences. These numbers reflect a downward trend during the reporting period. Between January and April 2016, on average, 426 children were held in Israeli military detention per month, which marked a 95 per cent increase compared to the monthly average in 2015 (219 children). During the reporting period, UNRWA referred over 60 cases of detained children to legal support and other services.

22. On 31 May 2016, Hamas executed three men charged with murder, the first executions since early 2014. The executions were implemented without the approval of Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, required under Palestinian law. During the reporting period, 22 new death sentences were passed by Gaza courts: 13 by civil courts against people convicted of murder and 9 by military courts against people convicted of treason; 13 death sentences were confirmed on appeal.

Movement, humanitarian access and operational space

23. In Gaza, restrictions on land and sea access imposed by the Government of Israel remained in place. Access of United Nations and non-governmental organization staff members to and from Gaza deteriorated during the reporting period, and denial by Israel of duty-related entry and exit permits for national staff reached concerning levels. While some measures have eased restrictions, obstructive policies on access and movement of Palestinian staff to and from Gaza largely remained in place.

24. During the reporting period, at least 289 reported incidents of delayed or denied access of United Nations and non-governmental organization staff members were reported at Israeli checkpoints, affecting 1,834 staff members. Around 41 of these took place as United Nations and non-governmental organization staff members crossed the Israeli-controlled Erez crossing to and from Gaza.

25. Access to and movement of Palestinians between most Palestinian urban centres in the West Bank, excluding East Jerusalem, remained restricted. The continued restrictions on Palestinian access to land, social services and economic opportunities in East Jerusalem and Area C hinder development efforts and severely constrain efforts to improve living conditions and reduce vulnerability.

26. Following the assassination of one of its militant leaders in Gaza on 24 March 2017, Hamas, in an unprecedented move, imposed a 10-day ban on movement from Gaza to Israel, except for select categories, including patients referred for medical treatment outside Gaza, relatives of Palestinian prisoners in Israel and three ministers of the Palestinian Government of national consensus. During the closure, fishing was also prohibited, resulting in the cancellation of over 5,000 fishing trips, thereby undermining the livelihoods of some 1,500 fishermen's families already affected by the six-mile access limit imposed by Israel. In addition, 111 patients were denied exit from Gaza to Israel by Hamas.

Barrier

27. The Office for the United Nations Register of Damage Caused by the Construction of the Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, established pursuant to the General Assembly resolution ES-10/17 of 24 January 2007, continued its outreach and claim intake activities. More than 61,000 claims and over 650,000 supporting documents have been collected. Claim intake activities have been completed in eight out of nine affected Palestinian governorates — Tubas, Jenin, Tulkarem, Qalqiliya, Salfit, Ramallah, Hebron and Bethlehem — and work is at an advanced stage in the Jerusalem governorate, including in and around East Jerusalem.

III. United Nations response

A. Human and social development

28. During the reporting period, the United Nations coordinated and delivered humanitarian assistance, including food assistance, to over 1.58 million people, protection assistance to nearly 1 million people, health and nutrition services to over 1.2 million people, water and sanitation to over 600,000 people, and over 150,000 people received some form of shelter and non-food item assistance.

29. As outlined in the United Nations Development Assistance Framework, United Nations development programming centred on six strategic areas: economic empowerment, livelihoods, decent work and food security; governance, rule of law, justice and human rights; education; health; social protection; and urban development, natural resource management and infrastructure.

Education

30. UNRWA provided free primary education to over 310,000 students enrolled in 363 elementary and preparatory schools in Gaza and the West Bank.

31. United Nations agencies continued to meet teachers' capacity-building needs in the area of quality, inclusive and child-friendly education. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) supported the training of teachers on the implementation of a non-violence policy through teacher training in the West Bank and Gaza. UNICEF training of teachers and principals on early childhood development practices benefited over 1,700 children in 49 targeted schools in the West Bank and Gaza.

32. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) scaled up the Al Fakhoora Dynamic Futures programme, supporting an additional 266 scholarships, which brought the total number of scholarships to 870.

33. United Nations agencies supported access to education through the construction and rehabilitation of education facilities, including the construction of a boys' school in Jerusalem and 12 community libraries in the West Bank and Gaza, and the rehabilitation of five kindergartens.

34. In Gaza, UNDP improved access to quality education for 88,311 students (43,997 female and 44,314 male) through the rehabilitation and reconstruction of 37 institutions which sustained substantial damage in the 2014 hostilities, including 12 partially damaged public schools, 13 private schools, 5 training centres and 7 higher education institutions. Similarly, UNRWA supported the construction or reconstruction of 10 new schools. The reconstruction and rehabilitation of schools was inspired by principles of "Building back better" and child-friendly schools.

Health

35. UNRWA provided health-care services in the West Bank through 43 health-care facilities, including six mobile clinics, 24 primary health-care centres, one hospital and one non-communicable disease referral centre, employing over 800 staff. In Gaza, health-care services were provided through 22 primary health-care facilities employing over 961 staff. Annually, an average of 27,795 Palestine refugees in the West Bank and 13,053 Palestine refugees in Gaza received assistance for hospital-care costs.

36. UNICEF continued to support the Ministry of Health to scale up the baby-friendly hospital initiative to encourage exclusive breastfeeding, training 55 nurses (30 men and 25 women) and doctors. By the end of 2016, nine maternity wards were certified as part of the initiative in the West Bank and Gaza. A total of 7,481 women and their newborns, and 60 midwives, were trained by UNICEF on the provision of postnatal home-visiting services. The World Health Organization (WHO) trained over 300 Ministry of Health personnel and health-care providers in reproductive health.

37. United Nations agencies contributed to health sector infrastructure through the upgrading of the chemotherapy department of a private hospital in East Jerusalem to serve at least 1,500 patients annually, the rehabilitation of the Princess Basma Centre for children with special needs and provision of surgical and medical equipment to five hospitals in Jerusalem and the West Bank. They also ensured that 10,214 uninsured or partially uninsured patients received subsidized health care at three main hospitals in Jerusalem. Equipment was provided to three primary health-care clinics and one hospital specialized in detecting, treating and referring cases of gender-based violence. WHO supported the Ministry of Health in the provision of essential equipment and training to improve breast cancer screening.

38. To respond to shortages in health supplies in Gaza, WHO assisted in filling urgent gaps of essential drugs, coordinated delivery of medical supplies from various donors and distributed fuel to health facilities to ensure continuity of health emergency services. UNDP expanded, rehabilitated and equipped medical facilities in Gaza, including the construction of neonatal intensive care units, increasing the overall capacity of neonatal services in Gaza to benefit 6,177 newborns.

Water and sanitation

39. UNICEF continued to support water, sanitation and hygiene efforts in schools, with 128,500 children (50 per cent of whom were girls) participating in hygiene promotion in 156 primary schools (116 in Gaza and 40 in the West Bank). In 2016, around 68,500 children from those same schools also received tankered water. An additional 237 schools (135 in Gaza and 102 in the West Bank) used the UNICEF-Ministry of Education and Higher Education hygiene education manual to promote key hygiene practices. A total of 1,734 hygiene kits were distributed in the West Bank and 176,000 in Gaza.

40. In Area C, at least 4,200 Palestinians benefited from the rehabilitation of a water network that reduced water loss to zero and the cost of water by 40 per cent. UNDP rehabilitated and expanded the landfill in Jericho city and built a recovery facility that will be used for sorting and recycling solid waste in the Jericho area. The total number of beneficiaries is around 62,000 residents in Jericho city and the Jordan River valley area.

41. In Gaza, UNICEF, in close partnership with the Palestinian Water Authority and the Coastal Municipalities Water Utility, increased access to safe drinking water for 75,000 people through the construction of the first phase of a desalination plant. UNDP improved the water, wastewater supply and wastewater system through the construction of infrastructure works.

Employment

42. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and the International Trade Centre, through a joint programme, established a full-service hub, which provides guidance to women-owned or women-run small, medium-sized and microenterprises and cooperatives through the

business development cycle. FAO continued to support 27 cooperatives (including six women's cooperatives) through activities aimed at increasing productivity and access to local as well as international markets, benefiting 1,318 people. In Gaza, the International Labour Organization supported capacity-building and business plan development for two cooperatives.

43. UN-Women supported 45 women-owned or women-run small, medium-sized and microenterprises, with 34 such enterprises given grants to enhance their businesses. The reporting period saw the 45 enterprises experience a 28 per cent increase in sales in the local market, a 4 per cent increase regionally and a 5 per cent increase internationally. In addition, there was a 21 per cent increase in the number of women employed full-time by targeted small, medium-sized and microenterprises (158 employees) compared to the previous reporting period.

44. UNDP provided skill-enhancement programmes to 200 young people in Jerusalem. 169 graduates from East Jerusalem were placed in employment, 131 of whom (78 per cent) were employed on a permanent basis (84 female and 47 male). An additional 28 marginalized families were economically supported in East Jerusalem through small-business grants. Through its infrastructure works, UNDP generated 11,741 working days in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, and 13,910 temporary working days and 554 permanent working days in Gaza.

Targeted social protection

45. During the reporting period, UNRWA distributed 394,634 food parcels to 20,623 Palestine refugee households (98,935 individuals) in Gaza, and UNICEF and the World Food Programme (WFP) continued to implement the e-voucher programme targeting the most vulnerable Palestinians through the provision of emergency food, water, sanitation and hygiene items, and school uniforms, reaching approximately 13,000 households with hygiene kits and 8,083 children with education assistance. Of those that benefited, approximately 4,000 households gained new knowledge about good nutrition and hygiene practices through a 12-week awareness-raising course. Through its winterization initiative in Gaza, UNICEF provided 620 households with e-vouchers for water, sanitation and hygiene and winterization items.

46. WFP continued to support the Government's social safety net programme, under which 213,000 people in Gaza and the West Bank received food and cash-based transfers. UNRWA provided cash-based assistance to over 36,000 beneficiaries.

Culture

47. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) supported the conservation and promotion of cultural heritage in the West Bank and Gaza through the rehabilitation of 11 historic sites, facilitating accessibility to cultural heritage assets and public social services.

48. UNDP supported the cultural tourism industry through operation and management services for the Khan al-Wakalah historical compound in Nablus and started the rehabilitation, restoration and operation and management services for Maqam-En Nabi Musa in Area C of the Jericho governorate. Both sites are anticipated to receive 140,000 visitors annually, creating 1,800 direct and indirect job opportunities. The United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) supported the rehabilitation of the Dar al-Consul Complex in East Jerusalem, which provides residents and tourists with a state-of-the-art, modern and safe civic centre. The Dar al-Consul facilities and services include a one-stop shop for young people and tourists.

49. UNDP supported a total of 541 young Palestinians from 14 municipal schools in East Jerusalem to benefit from cultural activities during the reporting period.

Food security and agriculture

50. FAO supported 1,318 farmers through improved cropping practices and pest management, enhanced access to and use of water, and strengthened compliance with international quality standards and certification. A total of 3,569 dunums of land were cultivated according to international standards, with high-value crops worth an estimated $44 million marketed in total by 21 farmer cooperatives, including more than $21 million in exports and almost $90,000 worth of processed food products produced by six women's cooperatives. Post-harvest capacities were also improved with the provision of tools and equipment for forklifts for 33 cooperatives in the West Bank and Gaza.

51. In the West Bank, over 800 farmers benefited from the rehabilitation of infrastructure for water management. UNDP worked with the Ministry of Agriculture to improve the productivity of 12 rural communities in the West Bank by opening 3.6 km of agricultural roads, which enabled access for more than 300 farmers to their land, and to construct water infrastructure which benefited over 1,000 farmers. In Gaza, FAO supported 340 farmers in the access-restricted areas to improve irrigation and productivity. FAO established a livestock market in Al-Thaharriyah in Hebron, providing 2,000 herders with a point of sale and access to the formal market.

Human rights, women, children and youth

52. The Palestinian Government, with technical assistance from United Nations agencies, submitted its initial State party report under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW/C/PSE/1) on 8 March 2017 and made significant progress on the six remaining reports of the core international human rights treaties. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights trained 106 representatives of human rights organizations and the Independent Commission for Human Rights, focusing on monitoring and documenting the Government's implementation of the legal commitments under the treaties. The Office also organized trainings for 139 representatives of civil society and community-based organizations on the provisions and standards in the human rights treaties to which Palestine has acceded.

53. UNDP and UN-Women supported 28,000 individuals, 55 per cent of whom were women, to benefit from legal aid by civil society organizations, and more than 6,000 women received awareness-raising on legal rights provided by civil society organizations in the West Bank and Gaza.

54. In 24 Area C communities, UNDP and UN-Women supported 800 women in participating in activities focusing on women's role in public life, following which 26 women were nominated for local government elections and received training on communication skills, community participation and local government-related issues. In Gaza, women also benefited from the Young Women Leaders programme, which provided 950 female university graduates with leadership, life-skills and self-development training.

55. The UNRWA Family and Child Protection programme in the West Bank identified 449 survivors (382 female and 67 male) of gender-based violence, domestic violence and/or other forms of abuse. All identified cases received individual counselling, and 21 critical/emergency cases were referred to specialized non-governmental organizations. In Gaza, 1,535 survivors of gender-based violence

were identified, with 1,518 cases referred to internal UNRWA service providers and an additional 17 cases referred to external partner service providers. Through these efforts, survivors accessed over 1,200 psychosocial counselling and legal service options.

56. United Nations agencies trained over 300 service providers, teachers and social counsellors on the detection of, response to and referral systems for gender-based violence cases in line with Palestinian national referral protocols and standard operating procedures. More than 11,800 survivors of gender-based violence received help from one or more of the psychosocial, health, legal and awareness-raising services in both the West Bank and Gaza. A new safe space for women and girls was set up in the West Bank, and outreach awareness activities were conducted, reaching nearly 5,000 beneficiaries.

57. UNICEF continues to lead the inter-agency working group for the monitoring and reporting of grave violations against children in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory in accordance with Security Council resolutions 1612 (2005) and 1882 (2009). In 2016, the working group documented and monitored a total of 2,050 incidents of grave violations against children.

58. During the reporting period, 14,590 youth were reached through empowerment programmes supported by UNFPA, including youth-led community initiatives to reduce their vulnerabilities, and through innovative youth initiatives targeting 450 youth and 20 decision makers. UNFPA supported two youth summits held in Jerusalem, and UN-Habitat engaged youth in the design of public space. UNICEF worked with its partners to promote the civic participation of adolescents through the introduction of six innovation labs (five in the West Bank and one in Gaza). As a result of the introduction of these labs a total of 1,528 adolescents (51 per cent of whom were female) in the West Bank and 366 adolescents in Gaza benefited from safe spaces where they can conduct research after school and where they can provide innovative solutions for issues that arise in their community or lives.

Environment, housing and urban development

59. UN-Habitat successfully finished the implementation of 10 spatial planning programmes in Area C of the West Bank, which helped reduce displacement pressure on more than 32,000 Palestinians. UNDP completed infrastructure projects that support communities and institutions located in Area C, benefiting 90,000 people through the improvement of public transportation infrastructure.

60. UN-Habitat continued its support for the National Spatial Plan for the State of Palestine and advocacy efforts to develop and negotiate planning solutions with the Israeli planning authorities.

61. In East Jerusalem, UNDP supported the development of a public space serving more than 40,000 residents, a children's playground accessible for 20,000 residents, and the rehabilitation of 19 residential units. Home rehabilitation was completed for 500 disadvantaged people with a focus on women-headed households. UNDP further rehabilitated more than 15 business centres in the Old City of Jerusalem and launched revitalization interventions to support the commercial districts of Sultan Suleiman and Salah Al-Din streets.

62. In Gaza, UN-Habitat supported the updating and development of two master plans and four detailed outline plans by the municipalities and community representative communities. UNDP rehabilitated 12,600 partially damaged housing units affected by the 2014 hostilities, for 82,290 non-refugees, reconstructed 2 units in Rafah, and constructed 56 new housing units for 392 beneficiaries in the northern

Gaza Strip. UNDP started the rehabilitation and consolidation of the Gaza Industrial Estate, to directly benefit 22,000 labourers and businessmen.

B. United Nations system emergency assistance

63. Most of the United Nations response focused on Gaza, which included some of the residual needs from the 2014 conflict. The 2016 response plan mobilized $280 million out of $571 million sought (49 per cent).

64. The 2017 Humanitarian Response Plan seeks $547 million, of which about 68 per cent of the requirements are for Gaza. The Plan includes $282 million for the UNRWA Emergency Appeal.

65. Despite the increasing pace of reconstruction, shelter remains the primary need, with approximately 40,000 persons remaining displaced as a result of the damage and destruction of housing stemming from the 2014 conflict. As of February 2017, a funding gap remains for nearly 4,000 totally destroyed homes and 57,000 homes which sustained partial damage.

66. The United Nations Mine Action Service clearance efforts have returned a sense of security for 1,500 Gazans living, farming and rebuilding in 106 of 136 locations suspected of harbouring buried explosive remnants of war.

67. UNDP contributed to addressing the energy crisis in Gaza through the construction of photovoltaic cells and the installation of solar panels in health and water facilities, schools and higher education institutions, and rehabilitated the electricity power distribution networks in three governorates, benefiting over 500,000 people.

Emergency agriculture support

68. Access to livelihood assets and resources was restored for more than 3,000 farmers, herders and rural households, of which almost 2,600 households benefited from the rehabilitation of water reservoirs in Gaza. 160 peri-urban poor households received materials for small-scale, home-based food production units.

Emergency food support

69. In the West Bank, WFP assisted 250,000 vulnerable and food-insecure individuals, 108,000 through cash-based transfers and 142,000 through in-kind food distributions. UNRWA and WFP continued their joint in-kind food assistance programme, supporting 37,000 marginalized Bedouin and herders in 85 Bedouin communities.

70. In Gaza, 960,000 refugees received food assistance, with UNRWA distributing 654,348 food parcels to 163,596 families, a sharp increase over the 80,000 individuals reliant on food assistance in 2000. WFP provided 81,500 food-insecure non-refugees with cash-based transfers and 164,000 non-refugees with in-kind food parcels during 2016.

Emergency education support

71. UNICEF facilitated access to education for 4,667 children and 333 teachers on their way to and from school in high-risk locations, particularly Area C, by providing a protective presence. Additionally, 6,760 children who continue to face learning challenges as a result of the 2014 conflict benefited from remedial education in Gaza.

72. The United Nations Mine Action Service, UNICEF and UNRWA, along with community-based organizations, ensured risk education messaging regarding explosive remnants of war was broadcast across Gaza. UNICEF reached 162,000 children and caregivers through education messages on the risks related to explosive remnants of war and unexploded ordnances. The United Nations Mine Action Service also provided 1,800 direct risk education sessions to 48,000 beneficiaries, including 34,000 children.

Emergency health support

73. UNICEF reached over 48,738 vulnerable children in Gaza with child protection services and psychosocial and case management support. Individual counselling was provided to 13,941 at-risk children, 49 per cent of whom were female, and structured group counselling was provided to 12,142 children attending UNRWA schools. Through UNRWA health centres, psychosocial and protection interventions were provided to 14,589 clients, primarily in the form of individual and group counselling. In addition, 28,007 public awareness sessions were held in schools, health centres and other facilities.

74. In the West Bank, the UNRWA emergency health programme supported six mobile health clinics operating in more than 66 locations, serving a population of 123,719 individuals and delivering 113,325 patient consultations. UNRWA provided mental health and psychosocial support to 55 Bedouin communities facing multiple protection threats. During the reporting period, six mobile psychosocial teams ensured that more than 9,200 individuals had monthly access to psychosocial and mental health support.

Emergency housing support

75. In Gaza, the United Nations Mine Action Service provided reconstruction partners with 92 risk assessments, 30 site-specific training sessions on the mitigation of explosive remnants of war, continuous quality assurance and support for disposal of explosive ordnances enabling reconstruction of vital infrastructure and housing.

76. As of December 2016, UNRWA provided cash assistance to over 81,000 families. UNDP provided cash assistance to 1,075 non-refugee families displaced by the 2014 conflict, allowing access to temporary shelter while their homes were being repaired or reconstructed. UNRWA provided cash assistance to 124 Palestine refugee families (more than 750 individuals) following home demolitions by the Israeli authorities. Further, 678 Palestine refugee families, comprising 3,771 individuals, received cash assistance and referrals to meet humanitarian needs following search and arrest operations by Israeli security forces in Palestine refugee camps leading to physical damages of their homes and emotional trauma.

Emergency income generation

77. In 2016, UNRWA in Gaza generated 4,651 temporary positions under the job creation programme and over 8,900 direct and indirect jobs through UNRWA construction projects. UNRWA also employed 14,179 area staff to run its operations and provided food vouchers and cash-for-work opportunities to over 15,750 refugee households, 8,037 households (43,199 individuals) in 19 Palestine refugee camps and 7,713 households (41,457 individuals) outside camps. This provided a cash injection of approximately $8,501,435 to food-insecure refugee households. Through the electronic food voucher programme, 46,010 Palestine refugees outside of camps were assisted with a total value of more than $4.8 million.

Emergency water and sanitation support

78. In the West Bank, UNICEF delivered safe drinking water to nearly 56,000 people in 2016. Another 14,000 people benefited from the installation of water infrastructure and storage facilities.

79. In Gaza, UNDP rehabilitated and reconstructed five water wells, 1,200 meters of water networks and two storage tanks that were destroyed in the 2014 conflict. Those efforts included the supply of electricity power networks to the two main sewage pumping stations of Beit Hanoun to mitigate the flooding of sewage water. UNICEF, in partnership with the Palestinian Water Authority and the Coastal Municipalities Water Utility, ensured that 44,130 people had increased access to improved sanitation through the rehabilitation and construction of wastewater networks in the Gaza southern governorates; 41,000 people gained access to water through repairs of water networks; and an additional 37,000 people gained access to water through the reconstruction of three damaged water wells.

80. UNRWA provided solid waste management in all eight Palestine refugee camps in Gaza. In addition, UNRWA provided fuel for the Coastal Municipalities Water Utility and Gaza municipalities to operate water and wastewater assets, municipal solid waste management services, storm water pumps to alleviate the flooding risk, and water wells affected by power outages.

Rubble removal and solid waste management

81. UNDP completed the removal of rubble and debris resulting from the 2014 hostilities in Gaza, benefiting 163,527 people (79,990 male and 83,537 female), and generating 42,122 working days for 717 workers from the population of the affected areas. The programme also supported the creation of emergency jobs, generating 166,372 working days from the community in clean-up activity for 3,707 workers (3,654 male and 53 female).

C. United Nations system support to Palestinian institutions

82. UNDP and UN-Women provided support to justice and security sector institutions, in order to mainstream a gender perspective in policies and planning processes, resulting in the Palestine Civil Police becoming the first police force in the Arab States to adopt a gender strategy.

83. The first-ever social security law for private sector workers and their family members was signed into law by President Abbas on 29 September 2016. In December 2016, the Board of Directors of the social security institution was appointed, with the Minister of Labour as Chair. The International Labour Organization has carried out an actuarial valuation of the social security schemes administered by the Public Pension Agency of Palestine.

84. UNICEF and UNDP supported the implementation of the new juvenile protection law, with training to juvenile judges. Enforcement offices for the family courts were established across the West Bank, and support was provided to the Palestinian Maintenance Fund. A national committee on legal aid was established, along with a specialized data base to support legal harmonization. A dispute resolution centre in East Jerusalem was established for civil and commercial solutions for disputes among Jerusalemites.

85. UNODC supported the Ministry of Justice through the training of seven forensic doctors, the establishment of three forensic medicine clinics, provision of equipment and supplies, provision of training to forensic nurses, and

the development of standard operating procedures in accordance with international standards.

86. FAO supported the Ministry of Agriculture and national institutions to coordinate active surveillance and monitoring in support of the national animal identification system, resulting in a registration rate of 92 per cent of targeted livestock.

87. UNESCO provided technical expertise to the drafting of the Basic Education Law by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education, which was signed by the President on 9 April 2017 following its endorsement by the Cabinet.

88. UN-Habitat supported coordinated advocacy by key Palestinian institutions, including in the drafting and adoption of the National Advocacy Strategy for Planning and Development in Area C of the West Bank.

89. UNDP developed and finalized a unified human resource management and development system that was implemented in seven ministries and finalized the General Personnel Council strategic plan for the period 2017-2022. The Palestinian International Cooperation Agency was established to provide expertise and knowledge in support of other countries, and local economic development units were established in five municipalities.

90. UNDP worked with the International Trade Centre and national trade institutions to expand markets and regional commercial connections and to develop the Palestinian export sector through initiatives including bilateral agreements for access to five international markets. UNDP also trained Palestinian Embassy staff to enable them to function as economic attachés to advocate for expanding trade and business relations around the world.

91. UNDP supported the Palestinian Government in submitting the first national communication report and national adaptation plan to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in November 2016, endorsed by 12 line ministries. The Palestinian, Israeli and Jordanian water authorities developed the first climate change visualization tool in the region, presenting 10 climatic indicators for 2030. UNDP trained 15 water and climate change professionals from the three countries in climate change modelling and visualization tools.

92. UNFPA supported the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics in developing the report *Palestine 2030 — Demographic Change: Opportunities for Development*, which provides a comprehensive analysis of the impact of the projected population on social sectors.

93. United Nations agencies supported the development of an information management system in the Ministry of Health to document survivals of gender-based violence and to ensure harmonized data collection, monitoring and reporting of gender-based violence cases based on the national referral system. The first national drug rehabilitation and treatment centre was also established with the Ministry of Health, with drug rehabilitation and treatment protocols, standard operating procedures and a code of ethics. Assistance was also provided to improve patient records and registries, and to strengthen hospital information systems and update hospital contingency plans.

94. UNICEF supported the Ministry of Social Development in conducting the first comprehensive study on the situation of children with disabilities in the West Bank and Gaza, and subsequently revised the Disability Law to ensure its alignment with international standards, including the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

95. UNICEF assisted the intersectoral national Early Childhood Development Committee to finalize the national strategy and early childhood interventions plan for the period 2017-2022, with an emphasis on early detection for children with developmental delays and disabilities and intervention services, focusing on the most vulnerable and hard to reach children.

96. WFP supported the Civil Defence in building capacity in the area of emergency preparedness and response, focusing on coordination and search and rescue. WFP delivered emergency response tools and is finalizing three governorate emergency operation and coordination centres to expand the ability of the Civil Defence to coordinate and respond to large-scale natural disasters.

D. Private sector development

97. In Gaza, 4,989 microfinance loans with a value of $7.4 million were disbursed. In the West Bank, 11,841 loans valued at over $16 million were disbursed, with Palestine refugees receiving 2,638 loans (valued at $3,484,604). Women and youth received 40 per cent of the loans extended.

E. Coordination of United Nations assistance

98. Under the auspices of the Deputy Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process/United Nations Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator, collaboration and coordination between the numerous donor and United Nations forums continued during the reporting period. The humanitarian country team met regularly to agree on humanitarian advocacy and response measures. With the support of the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process, the United Nations country team continued to coordinate its United Nations Development Assistance Framework programming, in alignment with the Palestinian National Development Plan priorities. Efforts to forge constructive partnerships between the United Nations, the Government of the State of Palestine and the broader aid community continued. The United Nations country team developed the common country analysis and the second United Nations Development Assistance Framework to cover the period 2018-2022 in alignment with the Palestinian Authority's National Policy Agenda. The United Nations continued preparation of regular Ad Hoc Liaison Committee reports, strategies and guidance for development and humanitarian work. In particular, the United Nations finalized its strategy for East Jerusalem and continued the implementation of the Hebron strategy for development and economic initiatives, and together with other humanitarian actors, the 2017 Humanitarian Response Plan.

IV. Donor response to the crisis

Budgetary and fiscal support

99. The fiscal position of the Government of the State of Palestine remained fragile despite improvements in fiscal performance. The Government improved its fiscal performance with strong growth in revenue and restrained growth in expenditure during the year, reducing its budget deficit from around 11 per cent of GDP in 2015 to an estimated 8 per cent of GDP in 2016. This was enabled by large transfers on account of lump sum payments on the clearance revenue account. Direct budget support by donors continued to decline, and arrears continued to accumulate.

Donor coordination

100. The Palestinian Government launched the national policy agenda for the period 2017-2022 on 22 February 2017. The United Nations Development Assistance Framework for the period 2018-2022 is being formulated. The coordination of humanitarian assistance and advocacy, led by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, continued.

101. In June 2016, the Area C Coordination Office within the Prime Minister's Office became operational, with the role of addressing both humanitarian and development issues and information-sharing and donor coordination.

102. The local aid coordination structure continued to serve as a key forum for donors and the Palestinian Government.

103. The Ad Hoc Liaison Committee met twice during the reporting period, in Brussels on 19 April 2016 and in New York on 19 September 2016.

V. Unmet needs

104. Given the continued humanitarian needs, the 2017 Humanitarian Response Plan is requesting $547 million, of which $282 million is also included in the UNRWA Emergency Appeal. To date, only 9 per cent of the requested amount for the Plan has been raised. Additional support is also urgently needed for the UNRWA core budget, which faces a predicted shortfall of $115 million for 2017.

105. Of the $3.5 billion pledged at the Cairo pledging conference for the recovery and reconstruction of Gaza in October 2014 (in the detailed needs assessment and recovery framework, a total need of $3.9 billion was estimated), some 46 per cent had been disbursed as of July 2016. However, only $16 million of these pledges has gone towards financing the productive sector needs identified in the detailed needs assessment and recovery framework (less than 3 per cent of the $602 million needed). Moreover, just over $100 million is still needed for the reconstruction of nearly 3,000 homes which were totally destroyed in 2014.

106. UNRWA is seeking $402 million in its 2017 Emergency Appeal to meet the minimum humanitarian needs of Palestine refugees in the occupied Palestinian territory. A total of $355 million is required for programme interventions in Gaza, including $89.4 million for emergency food assistance, $138.4 million for emergency shelter assistance, $69.9 million for emergency cash-for-work assistance, $4.5 million for emergency health, and $5.0 million for education in emergencies.

VI. Challenges

107. During the reporting period, the operating environment remained challenging, owing in large part to restrictions on access and movement. In Gaza, the ability of United Nations organizations and partners to deliver timely assistance was limited at times due to physical barriers such as checkpoints, a restrictive permit policy for humanitarian personnel, and restrictions on the import of materials into Gaza. In the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, restrictions on movement and access, the demolition of Palestinian infrastructure and the associated displacement of Palestinians also impacted United Nations operations.

108. The lack of progress on intra-Palestinian reconciliation continues to impact the ability of the United Nations to reach and provide comprehensive assistance for institution-strengthening and the statehood agenda. Announcements by the

Government of Israel during the reporting period, in particular in relation to settlement expansion in early 2017, contributed to an escalation of tensions.

109. Development and humanitarian funding to the State of Palestine has continued to decline during the reporting period, requiring greater strategic focus of interventions and identifying opportunities for synergies with other implementing entities.

VII. Conclusions

110. The operational context for the work of the United Nations in the reporting period was increasingly difficult due to the challenges outlined above, along with a constrained funding environment. The United Nations will continue to work towards the realization of a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 1397 (2002), 1515 (2003), 1850 (2008), 1860 (2009) and 2334 (2016), an end to the occupation that began in 1967, and the establishment of a sovereign, democratic, viable and contiguous Palestinian State, existing side by side in peace with a secure Israel.